

DISK DRIVE MEASURING POLE TIP PROTRUSION BY PERFORMING A WRITE OPERATION TO HEAT THE TRANSDUCER

4 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 Field of the Invention

6 The present invention relates to disk drives. In particular, the present invention relates to
7 a disk drive measuring pole tip protrusion (PTP) by performing a write operation to heat the
8 transducer.

9 Description of the Prior Art

10 FIG. 1A and 1B show a prior art head disk assembly (HDA) comprising a disk 2 having a
11 disk surface 4. The disk 2 is rotated about a center axis while a transducer 6 writes and reads
12 data to/from the disk surface 4. The transducer 6 is mounted in a slider which is attached to the
13 distal end of an actuator arm 8. The actuator arm 8 is rotated about a pivot by a voice coil motor
14 (VCM) 10 in order to actuate the transducer 6 radially over the disk surface 4. The disk surface 4
15 comprises a number of radially spaced, concentric tracks 12 as defined by a number of embedded
16 servo sectors 14. The embedded servo sectors 14 are read by the transducer 6 and processed by a
17 servo control system in order to maintain the transducer 6 over a center of a target track while
18 writing or reading data. The disk drive may employ top and bottom transducers for
19 reading/writing both the top and bottom surfaces of the disk 2.

20 As the disk 2 rotates, an air bearing forms between the disk surface 4 and the transducer 6
21 such that the transducer 6 “flies” just above the disk surface 4. It is desirable to minimize the fly
22 height to achieve high recording densities since the read signal strength increases as the gap
23 between the transducer 6 and disk surface 4 decreases. However, if the transducer 6 actually
24 contacts the disk surface 4 during operation it can result in medium defects as well as undesirable
25 head wear. The physical characteristics of the slider, disk 2, and actuator arm 8, are therefore
26 designed to achieve a desired fly height while minimizing the occurrence of head/disk contact. To
27 facilitate the design process, various in-situ techniques have been employed to measure the fly

1 height of production disk drives. The fly height measurement may also be used to identify and
2 discard or repair marginal disk drives during the manufacturing process as well as to predict drive
3 failure while in the field.

4 U.S. Patent 4,777,544 discloses a harmonic ratio fly height measurement technique
5 wherein a data sequence is written to the disk which upon readback has a spectrum that is
6 constant along the track and which has non-zero amplitude for at least two different frequencies.
7 For example, a data sequence is written to the disk such that the readback spectrum comprises a
8 fundamental frequency and odd harmonics. The fly height is then measured by computing the
9 natural logarithm of the ratio between the fundamental frequency and the third harmonic
10 frequency at two different fly heights (two different angular velocities). Although this technique
11 provides an adequate fly height measurement of a static head/disk interface, it does not account
12 for changes in fly height due to pole tip protrusion. Pole tip protrusion occurs when the part of
13 the slider expands due to heating during a write operation, wherein the resulting protrusion can
14 cause the slider to contact the disk surface.

15 There is, therefore, a need to measure pole tip protrusion in a disk drive to facilitate design
16 modifications, manufacture screening, and drive failure prediction.

17 **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

18 The present invention may be regarded as a disk drive comprising a disk and a slider
19 comprising a transducer which is actuated over the disk for generating a write signal when writing
20 data to the disk and for generating a read signal when reading data from the disk. The disk drive
21 further comprises a disk controller for generating a pole tip protrusion (PTP) measurement by
22 writing a first data sequence along a first section of the disk. The first data sequence is read from
23 the first section during a first read operation to generate a first signal measurement. The
24 transducer is heated by writing a second data sequence along a second section of the disk
25 preceding the first section, wherein heating the transducer causes at least part of the slider to
26 protrude toward the disk. While the part of the slider is protruding toward the disk, the first data
27 sequence is again read from the first section during a second read operation to generate a second

1 signal measurement. The PTP measurement is then generated in response to the first and second
2 signal measurements.

3 In one embodiment, the first data sequence comprises an alternating sequence of high
4 frequency magnetic transitions and low frequency magnetic transitions.

5 In another embodiment, the first and second sections are aligned along a circumferential
6 path. In an alternative embodiment, the first section is aligned along a first circumferential path,
7 and the second section is aligned along a second circumferential path radially offset from the first
8 circumferential path. In one embodiment, the transducer comprises a read element and a write
9 element, wherein the read element is radially offset from the write element. The disk controller
10 employs a micro-jog value for aligning the read element along the first circumferential path while
11 the write element writes the second data sequence along the second circumferential path.

12 In still another embodiment, the disk drive comprises a read channel having write gate
13 circuitry for enabling a write gate while writing the second data sequence along the second
14 circumferential path. In one embodiment the read channel comprises read gate circuitry for
15 enabling a read gate during the second read operation after writing the second data sequence
16 along the second circumferential path.

17 In one embodiment, the read signal is filtered during the first read operation to generate a
18 first harmonic component and a second harmonic component, the read signal is filtered during the
19 second read operation to generate a third harmonic component and a fourth harmonic component,
20 and the PTP measurement is generated in response to the first, second, third and forth harmonic
21 component. In one embodiment, a difference between the first harmonic component and the
22 second harmonic component is computed to generate a first value, and a difference between the
23 third harmonic component and the fourth harmonic component is computed to generate a second
24 value. The PTP measurement is then generated by computing a difference between the first and
25 second values.

26 The present invention may also be regarded as a method for generating a pole tip
27 protrusion (PTP) measurement for a disk drive. The disk drive comprises a disk and a slider

1 having a transducer actuated over the disk for generating a write signal when writing data to the
2 disk and for generating a read signal when reading data from the disk. A first data sequence is
3 written along a first section of the disk, and then the first data sequence is read from the first
4 section to generate a first signal measurement. The transducer is heated by writing a second data
5 sequence to a second section of the disk preceding the first section, wherein heating the
6 transducer causes at least part of the slider to protrude toward the disk. While the part of the
7 slider is protruding toward the disk, the first data sequence is read again from the first section to
8 generate a second signal measurement. The PTP measurement is then generated in response to
9 the first and second signal measurements.

10 **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

11 FIGs. 1A and 1B show a prior art disk drive comprising a disk with a slider having a
12 transducer actuated over the disk surfaces by a voice coil motor (VCM), a read channel for
13 demodulating a read signal emanating from the transducer, and a disk controller for controlling
14 operation of the disk drive.

15 FIG. 2 shows a flow diagram executed by the disk controller according to an embodiment
16 of the present invention for generating a pole tip protrusion (PTP) measurement by writing a first
17 data sequence to the disk, reading the first data sequence to generate a first signal measurement,
18 heating the transducer by writing a second data sequence to the disk, and rereading the first data
19 sequence to generate a second signal measurement.

20 FIG. 3A illustrates an embodiment wherein the first data sequence is written in a selected
21 wedge.

22 FIG. 3B illustrates an embodiment wherein the second data sequence is written to the disk
23 in a number of wedges preceding the first data sequence in order to heat the transducer.

24 FIGs. 4A and 4B shows an embodiment of the present invention wherein the transducer
25 comprises a read element offset from the write element, wherein the second data sequence is
26 written to the disk in order to heat the transducer along a circumferential path that is offset from
27 the path of the first data sequence that is read to generate the PTP measurement.

1 FIG. 5 shows components of a read channel according to an embodiment of the present
2 invention which facilitate the PTP measurement.

3 FIG. 6 is a more detailed flow diagram according to an embodiment of the present
4 invention wherein the PTP measurement is generated as the difference between harmonics in the
5 read signal when reading the first data sequence.

6 **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS**

7 FIGS. 1A, 1B and 2 show a disk drive according to an embodiment of the present
8 invention comprising a disk 2 and a slider comprising a transducer 6 which is actuated over the
9 disk 2 for generating a write signal when writing data to the disk 2 and for generating a read
10 signal when reading data from the disk 2. The disk drive further comprises a disk controller 16
11 for generating a pole tip protrusion (PTP) measurement according to the flow diagram of FIG. 2.
12 At step 18 a first data sequence is written along a first section of the disk 2. At step 20 the first
13 data sequence is read from the first section during a first read operation to generate a first signal
14 measurement. At step 22 the transducer 6 is heated by writing a second data sequence along a
15 second section of the disk 2 preceding the first section, wherein heating the transducer 6 causes at
16 least part of the slider to protrude toward the disk 2. While the part of the slider is protruding
17 toward the disk 2, at step 24 the first data sequence is again read from the first section during a
18 second read operation to generate a second signal measurement. At step 26 the PTP
19 measurement is then generated in response to the first and second signal measurements.

20 The disk drive in FIG. 1A comprises a read channel 28 for demodulating the read signal
21 emanating from the transducer 6 into an estimated data sequence provided to the disk controller
22 16. The read channel 28 may also comprise suitable servo demodulation circuitry for
23 demodulating the embedded servo sectors 14 into servo signals provided to the disk controller 16
24 for position the transducer 6 over the target track. In one embodiment, the read channel 28
25 further comprises suitable circuitry for generating the first and second signal measurements, such
26 as filters for extracting a first and third harmonic as described in more detail below with reference
27 to FIG. 5. The read channel 28 may be implemented as a separate integrated circuit, or it may be

1 combined with the disk controller 16 into a “system on a chip”.

2 Any suitable data sequences may be employed to perform the PTP measurement. In one
3 embodiment, the first data sequence is written to the disk 2 by writing a first sequence of
4 magnetic transitions to the first section, and then writing a second sequence of magnetic
5 transitions to the first section. In another embodiment, the first data sequence may be written to
6 the disk 2 by writing a single sequence of magnetic transitions, such as a triple harmonic pattern
7 comprising an alternating sequence of high frequency magnetic transitions and low frequency
8 magnetic transitions as described in more detail with reference to FIG. 6.

9 FIGs. 3A and 3B illustrate an embodiment of the present invention wherein the embedded
10 servo sectors 14 define a number of wedges W_0-W_N . The first data sequence 30 is written in a
11 selected wedge W_4 and read during the first read operation to generate the first signal
12 measurement. In FIG. 3B, the transducer 6 is heated by writing a second data sequence 32 in
13 wedges W_0-W_3 preceding wedge W_4 , and then the first data sequence 30 is read immediately
14 thereafter during the same revolution of the disk 2 to generate the second signal measurement. In
15 an alternative embodiment, the first data sequence 30 and/or the second data sequence 32 are
16 written to data sectors within a wedge rather than writing an entire wedge. Any suitable data
17 sequence 32 may be written to the disk 2 in order to heat the transducer 6, such as a data
18 sequence that writes a high frequency sequence of magnetic transitions. The second data
19 sequence 32 may also be the same as the first data sequence 30.

20 In the embodiment of FIG. 3A and 3B, the second data sequence 32 is aligned with the
21 first data sequence 30 along the same circumferential path. However in an alternative
22 embodiment, the second data sequence 32 may be written along a circumferential path which is
23 radially offset from the circumferential path of the first data sequence 30. This embodiment is
24 illustrated in FIGs. 4A and 4B wherein the transducer 6 comprises a magnetoresistive transducer
25 having a read element 34 which is radially offset from a write element 36. As shown in FIG. 4A,
26 when writing the first data sequence 30 to the disk 2 the read element 34 reads the embedded
27 servo sectors 14 and provides position information to the disk controller 16. The disk controller

1 16 generates appropriate servo control signals to the VCM 10 in order to maintain the read
2 element 34 over the center of a target track while the write element 36 writes the first data
3 sequence 30 to the disk 2. When reading the first data sequence 30, the disk controller 16
4 introduces a “micro-jog” value into the servo control signals to account for the offset between the
5 read/write elements to thereby align the read element 34 along the circumferential path of the first
6 data sequence 30. As shown in FIG. 4B, when the second data sequence 32 is written to the disk
7 2 the disk controller 16 servos on the embedded servo sectors 14 using the same micro-jog value
8 as that used to read the first data sequence 30. In this manner the first data sequence 30 can be
9 read immediately after writing the second data sequence 32 without having to compensate for the
10 offset between read/write elements as would typically be the case when switching from a normal
11 write operation to a read operation. The second data sequence 32 can be written in this manner
12 since it is never actually read; it is only written to heat the transducer 6. In one embodiment, a
13 particular region of the disk 2 is reserved to perform the PTP measurement so that other user data
14 recorded on the disk 2 is not corrupted when the second data sequence 32 is written to the disk 2.

15 FIG. 5 shows components of a read channel 28 according to an embodiment of the present
16 invention which facilitate the PTP measurement. The read signal 38 emanating from the
17 transducer 6 is sampled by sampling device 40, and the read signal sample values 42 filtered by a
18 first filter 44 for extracting the first harmonic component and by a second filter 46 for extracting
19 the third harmonic component. The samples 48 of the first harmonic component are accumulated
20 by a first harmonic accumulator 50, and the samples 52 of the third harmonic component are
21 accumulated by a third harmonic accumulator 54. A sequence generator 56 generates the first
22 data sequence 30 and the second data sequence 32. A write gate counter circuit 58 is loaded with
23 a number of wedges for writing the second data sequence 32. A read gate window circuit 60 is
24 programmed with a delay equal to the interval for writing the second data sequence 32, together
25 with a window length for reading the first data sequence 30. A bit in a register 62 is programmed
26 in order to enable the PTP mode, and the disk controller 16 generates various control signals 63
27 for controlling the read channel 28 components to generate the PTP measurement.

1 FIG. 6 is a flow diagram according to a more detailed embodiment of the present
2 invention for generating the PTP measurement using the read channel circuitry of FIG. 5. At step
3 64, the disk drive is configured for a write operation, which includes activating the appropriate
4 transducer (in a multiple transducer disk drive) and configuring the disk controller 16 to servo the
5 transducer 6 over the target track for writing the first data sequence 30. Once the transducer 6 is
6 servoing over the target track, at step 66 the disk controller 16 waits until the transducer 6
7 reaches wedge N which in one embodiment is identified relative to an index mark recorded in one
8 of the servo sectors 14. When the transducer 6 reaches the servo sector 14 identifying wedge N,
9 at step 68 the disk controller 16 writes the first data sequence 30 comprising a triple harmonic
10 pattern to wedge N via the read channel 28. The triple harmonic pattern comprises a sequence
11 111100000111100000... which writes a an alternating sequence of high frequency magnetic
12 transitions and low frequency magnetic transitions.

13 At step 70 the disk drive is configured for a read operation, which includes activating the
14 appropriate transducer and configuring the disk controller 16 to servo the transducer 6 over the
15 target track for reading the first data sequence 30 including the use of an appropriate micro-jog
16 value if the transducer 6 is a magnetoresistive transducer. Once the transducer 6 is servoing over
17 the target track, at step 72 the disk controller 16 waits until the transducer 6 reaches wedge N.
18 When the transducer 6 reaches wedge N, at step 74 the disk controller 16 enables the harmonic
19 accumulators 50 and 54 (FIG. 5) via OR gates 78 and 80 and reads the first data sequence 30
20 from wedge N to generate the read signal 38. At step 82 the read signal 38 is filtered by filters 44
21 and 46 to extract the first harmonic component and the third harmonic component, and the
22 samples of the harmonic components are accumulated by the harmonic accumulators 50 and 54.
23 The disk controller 16 then computes an initial fly height measurement $\Delta 1$ at step 83 prior to
24 heating the transducer 6 in response to the values stored in the harmonic accumulators 50 and 54.
25 The fly height of the transducer 6 can be estimated by computing the natural log of the ratio f_1/f_3 ,
26 where f_1 is the amplitude of the first harmonic component and f_3 is the amplitude of the third
27 harmonic component. The natural log of the ratio f_1/f_3 can be estimated by computing the

1 difference between the amplitude of the first and third harmonic components. Therefore at step
2 83, the disk controller 16 generates an initial fly height measurement $\Delta 1$ as the difference between
3 the amplitudes of the first and third harmonic components stored in the harmonic accumulators 50
4 and 54.

5 At step 84 the disk drive is again configured for a write operation, which may include
6 activating the appropriate transducer and configuring the disk controller 16 to servo the
7 transducer 6 over the target track for reading the first data sequence 30 including the use of an
8 appropriate micro-jog value if the transducer 6 is a magnetoresistive transducer (see the above
9 description with reference to FIG. 4B as to why the disk controller 16 is configured to servo over
10 the target track for reading the first data sequence 30 while writing the second data sequence 32).
11 Once the transducer 6 is servoing over the target track, at step 86 the disk controller 16 waits
12 until the transducer 6 reaches wedge 0 (or any other suitable wedge preceding wedge N).

13 At step 88, the disk controller 16 configures the read channel 28 for the PTP measurement
14 by programming the write gate counter circuit 58 (FIG. 5) with a value corresponding to the
15 number wedges for writing the second data sequence 32, and programming the read gate window
16 circuit 60 with a delay value corresponding to the write interval together with a read window for
17 reading the first data sequence 30. The disk controller 16 then enables the PTP mode at step 88
18 by programming register 62 which enables the sequence generator 56 and the write gate 90 via
19 the write gate counter 58 so that at step 92 the second data sequence 32 is written to wedges W_0 -
20 W_{N-1} to thereby heat the transducer 6.

21 After writing the second data sequence 32 to wedges W_0 - W_{N-1} the transducer 6 is already
22 servoing over the target track and the read element 34 (FIG. 4B) is aligned with the first data
23 sequence 30. Therefore at step 94 the read gate signal 96 is enabled by the read gate window
24 circuit 60, and at step 98 the first data sequence 30 is read immediately from wedge N to generate
25 the read signal 38. At step 100 the read signal 38 is again filtered by filters 44 and 46 to extract
26 the first and third harmonic components, the samples of which are accumulated by the harmonic
27 accumulators 50 and 54. At the end of wedge N, the read gate window circuit 60 disables the

1 read gate 96 and the harmonic accumulators 50 and 54 via OR gates 78 and 80. At step 102 the
2 disk controller 16 subtracts the values stored in the harmonic accumulators 50 and 54 to generate
3 a second fly height measurement $\Delta 2$. At step 104 the disk controller 16 computes a difference
4 between the initial fly height measurement $\Delta 1$ and the second fly height measurement $\Delta 2$ to
5 generate the PTP measurement.